AUTUMN SONG ELK GAME FARM
DECISION DOCUMENT
November 30, 1996

PROPOSED GAME FARM APPLICATION

On July 11, 1996, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) received an application for a game farm from Jeff & Kim Cuthbertson of 790 Lindsey Lane, Kalispell, MT 59937 and Gary & JoAnn Cuthbertson of 1040 Holt Drive, Bigfork, MT 59937. The game farm would be located at 2320 Lower Valley Road., Kalispell, Montana (T27N, R20W, Section 6).

On August 10, 1996 FWP notified the applicants that they would accept the original application which initiated a 120-day review and decision period per laws and regulations governing game farms. FWP completed the EA process for the application within the 120-day time period from the day we accepted the original application.

The applicant proposes to raise elk for purposes of antler production and elk breeding. They plan to start with less than 20 elk and expand the farm to no more than 120 animals on 120 acres over time. They will begin this herd with elk purchased from licensed game farms in Montana. The proposed elk farm will occupy land which now consists of 117 acres of irrigatable hayland and 10.1 acres of cropland. The enclosure would not encompass any wetlands, intermittent or perennial streams, or open water.

In the application, the applicant stated that:

a. All fencing would be 8' high with 6 inch stays and composed of 12 1/2 gauge tightlock wire fence.

b. Metal posts would be placed at 24' intervals along the fence with stays spaced every 8'.

c. Interior fence would be 6 feet with 6 inch stays and use wood posts.

d. The quarantine facility would be composed of metal 25' X 40' building along the exterior fence line. Interior separation of the game farm would be through a 8' solid wood wall with a 16' wide double self-closing gate with a double latch?

e. Water would be available in each pasture from fountain type structure using well water.

THE MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT PROCESS (MEPA)

Pursuant to MEPA, FWP is required to assess the impacts of the proposed action to the human environment. FWP completed a Draft Environmental Assessment of the proposed game farm on October 23, 1996. During the EA preparation, it was determined that a full Environmental Impact Statement would not be required. The Draft EA was distributed to the Montana Environmental Quality Council, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Montana Historical Society, Montana State Library, Montana Department of Livestock, state and local libraries, Montana River Action Network, Montana Wildlife Federation, Flathead County

Commissioners, Flathead County legislative representatives, and interested individuals. FWP sent cards indicating the availability of the Draft EA to another 21 individuals who have requested to be kept informed of game farm applications in the past or who are adjacent landowners. Another seven Draft EAs were then distributed to individuals who completed these cards. The public comment period began October 21, 1996 and closed November 18, 1996. No public hearing was held nor were any public comments received.

ISSUES OF CONCERN IN THE EA

The EA process identified no significant environmental impacts that could not be mitigated. Because the proposed game farm will be constructed in foraging and travel areas used year-round by white-tailed deer, they will be excluded from the 120 acre area. Additionally, the proposed game farm would displace habitat for pheasants, Hungarian partridge, and a variety of small mammals and birds. As agricultural lands are presently abundant, these impacts are considered minor.

Due to its location in the heart of the Flathead Valley, there is only a low possibility that wild animals such as native elk, black bears, or mountain lions would be attracted to the area. Coyotes are very common to the proposed game farm site. Responsible management and adherence to FWP stipulations and regulations should reduce the risks of contact between wild game animals and game farm animals to an acceptable level. There is no surface water within or immediately adjacent to the game farm which could be contaminated from runoff from the game farm.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC RESPONSES

Fish, Wildlife & Parks received one written response to the Draft EA from the State Historic Preservation Office which indicated that there were no known historic or cultural sites located within the proposed game farm boundaries.

THE DECISION AND STIPULATIONS

The Licensee must be in compliance with all game farm statutes and rules. After reviewing this application, the draft EA, and public comments, I approve issuing a license with the following stipulations:

1. The licensee or manager must report the ingress of any game animal or any predators of ungulates (e.g., mountain lion, black bear or coyote) to FWP immediately upon the discovery, and the reason for such ingress.

2. Applicant must obtain approval of a quarantine facility, or plan, from the Department of Livestock (DoL) prior to the issuance of a game farm license.

12/6/96

Daniel P. Vincent
Regional Supervisor

Date

Jeff & Kim Cuthbertson

Date

Gary & JoAnn Cuthbertson

Date

REF:CUTH-DEC.WPD
NOV. 30, 1996

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. GAME FARM LICENSE APPLICATION

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Park's authority to regulate game farms is contained in sections 87-4-406 through 87-4-424, MCA and ARM 12.6.1501 through 12.6.1519.

1. **Name of Project:** Autumn Song Elk Ranch L. L. P.

   Application Date: 7/11/96

2. **Name, Address and Phone Number of Applicant(s):**

   Gary & JoAnn Cuthbertson
   1040 Holt Drive
   Bigfork, MT 59937 (406) 837-4616

   Jeff & Kim Cuthbertson
   790 Lindsey Lane
   Kalispell, MT 59937 (406) 257-4234

3. **If Applicable:**

   Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: 7/10/96

   Estimated Completion Date: 7/10/98

   Is this an application for expansion of existing facility or is a future expansion contemplated? N/A

4. **Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township):**
   2320 Lower Valley Rd., Kalispell, MT 59901 Flathead County, R20W, T27N, Section 6

5. **Project Size:** Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

   (a) Developed:
   residential..... 2.9 acres
   industrial..... ___ acres

   (b) Open Space/Woodlands/Areas.... ___ acres

   (c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas..... ___ acres

   (d) Floodplain... ___ acres

   (e) Productive:
   irrigated hayland... 117 acres
   dry cropland..... 10.1 acres
   forestry..... ___ acres
   rangeland..... ___ acres
   other..... ___ acres

6. **Map/site plan:** Attach a copy of the map submitted with the application (an 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map) showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

See attached.

7. **Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action:**

Applicants propose to raise and breed elk in captivity for the purposes of antler production and to sell elk breeding stock. The applicants plan to start with less than 20 elk and build up to approximately 120 elk. The benefits of the program are an increased opportunity for the public to view elk in captivity and the increased revenue through taxes and income generated in the local economy by this new business.

8. **Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction:**

(a) Permits:

Agency Name	Permit	Date Filed/#
Department of Livestock		

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
Department of Livestock	Tagging. Quarantine, Inspections for Transport
Flathead County Weed Control	Weed Control
Flathead Regional Development Office	Planning, Zoning

9. **List of Agencies Consulted During Preparation of the EA:**
Department of Livestock
Flathead Regional Development Office

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Evaluation of the Impacts of the Proposed Action Including Secondary and Cumulative Impacts on the Physical and Human Environment:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	POTENTIAL IMPACT				CAN IMPACT BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	UNKNOWN	NONE	MINOR	SIGNIFICANT		
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		x				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?			x			1a.
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		x				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		x				
e. Other:						

PROPOSED ACTION:
1a. The soils in pasture areas may become slightly more compacted as animal numbers increase. The degree of compaction would depend on pasture management and irrigation levels.

NO ACTION:
If existing land uses continue, no changes in soils would be expected.

COMMENTS:

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	POTENTIAL IMPACT				CAN IMPACT BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	UNKNOWN	NONE	MINOR	SIGNIFICANT		
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality?		x				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		x				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		x				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		x				
e. Other:						

PROPOSED ACTION:

No impact to air quality expected.

NO ACTION:
No changes in air quality would occur if land stays as agricultural.

COMMENTS:

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	POTENTIAL IMPACT				CAN IMPACT BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	UNKNOWN	NONE	MINOR	SIGNIFICANT		
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		x				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		x				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		x				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		x				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		x				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		x				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		x				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		x				
i. Violation of the Montana non-degradation statute?		x				
j. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		x				
k. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		x				
l. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		x				
m. Other:						

PROPOSED ACTION:
There are no wetlands, irrigation ditches, or streams of any type on the proposed game farm site. There is a small (< 2 ac) portion of old river meander channel which crosses the northwest corner of the proposed game farm. Within the border of the proposed game farm, this old meander does not contain any wetland vegetation; rather, it is part of the existing hay field. This old meander drains off to the east and is only approximately 6 feet deep. It is cut off to the north by Lower Valley Road. Other than temporary melt ponds, no water is expected to remain on site with the game farm for any length of time.

NO ACTION:

No impacts to water quality or quantity expected if land remains cropland.

COMMENTS:
Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in:	POTENTIAL IMPACT				CAN IMPACT BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	UNKNOWN	NONE	MINOR	SIGNIFICANT		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of native plant species?		x				
b. Alteration of a native plant community?		x				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		x				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?			x			4d.
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			x			4e.
f. Other:						

PROPOSED ACTION:
4d. At full size (120 elk on 127 acres) the game farm would occupy most of existing irrigated hay fields and 10 acres of dry cropland. This is approximately 1 to 2 percent of existing agricultural lands in lower valley area.
4e. Although portions of the game farm will be irrigated for hay and pasture during the growing season, vegetative cover could be reduced or eliminated at full stocking in concentration areas, winter feeding areas, etc. Ground disturbances by grazing animals may lead to increase in noxious weeds. County weed law requires the private land owner to control noxious weeds.

NO ACTION:
As agricultural land no change is expected.

COMMENTS:

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	POTENTIAL IMPACT				CAN IMPACT BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	UNKNOWN	NONE	MINOR	SIGNIFICANT		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		x				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game species?			x			5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			x			5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		x				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?			x			5e.
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		x				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		x				
h. Other:						

PROPOSED ACTION:
5b. The proposed game farm would convert existing agricultural hay/cropland to pasture causing reduction in food and cover for upland game birds (e.g. pheasants, Hungarian partridges) and migratory and resident waterfowl.

5c. Ground nesting nongame birds such as vesper or chipping sparrows which may use hay land may decrease due to continuous grazing disturbances. At full operation, small mammal populations may be reduced, causing less use by raptors such as red-tailed hawks and harriers.
5e. Proposed action may reduce foraging and travel uses by resident white-tailed deer.

NO ACTION:
Maintaining existing land uses (agriculture) would allow for continued use by resident upland game birds, migratory and resident waterfowl, and a variety of nongame birds and mammals.

COMMENTS:

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish/Wildlife Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

PROVIDE NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION FOR THE FOLLOWING:

Wildlife use of the area and potential for through-the-fence contact with game farm animals (consider year-around use, traditional seasonal habitat use, and location of travel routes and migration corridors).

Due to the existing hay fields the proposed game farm area may be currently used by white-tailed deer as a foraging area in spring, summer, and fall. The proposed game farm would not block any migrating routes to other foraging areas. The general lack of cover on the existing farm probably reduces the current use of the area by the white-tailed deer. There is a slight potential for through-the-fence contact by resident white-tailed deer moving from the Church Slough area to other agricultural lands.

Potential for escape of game farm animals or ingress of wildlife (consider site-specific factors that could reduce the effectiveness of perimeter fences built to standards outlined in Rule 12.6.1503A, including steepness of terrain, winter snow depths/drifting, susceptibility of fences to flood damage, etc.).

There are few risks to fence integrity due to: 1. Lack of trees on property, particularly along fencelines; 2. location of game farm outside traditional elk range; 3. gentle or flat terrain; and 4. the location of the game farm outside areas usually used by larger predators (e.g. mountain lion, grizzly bear, wolf).

Proportion (%) of the total habitat area currently used by wildlife that will be enclosed or otherwise impacted.

Less than 1 percent of Lower Valley area.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	POTENTIAL IMPACT				CAN IMPACT BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	UNKNOWN	NONE	MINOR	SIGNIFICANT		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			x			6a.
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		x				
c. Other:						

PROPOSED ACTION:
6a. Elk bugling in fall may be heard off-site by neighbors.

NO ACTION:
Noise would remain the same as that associated with farming and haying if land remains in agriculture.

COMMENTS:

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects of Noise Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	POTENTIAL IMPACT				CAN IMPACT BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	UNKNOWN	NONE	MINOR	SIGNIFICANT		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		x				
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		x				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		x				
d. Conflict with any existing land use that would be adversely affected by the proposed action?		x				
e. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		x				
f. Other:						

PROPOSED ACTION:

NO ACTION:
If land remained as agricultural, no land use impacts would be expected.

COMMENTS:

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Use (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	POTENTIAL IMPACT				CAN IMPACT BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	UNKNOWN	NONE	MINOR	SIGNIFICANT		
a. Risk of dispersal of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to chemicals, pathogens, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			x		x	8a.
b. Creation of any hazard or potential hazard to domestic livestock?			x		x	8b.
c. Creation of any hazard or potential hazard to human health?			x		x	8c.
d. Other:						

PROPOSED ACTION:
8a.b.c. Minor impacts could be associated with elk game farming as these animals have the potential to transmit disease to humans, livestock, and native wildlife (see comments). Risk of dispersal of diseased elk (e.g. elk which might carry tuberculosis or other pathogen) or genetically impure animals (e.g red deer) which could significantly affect native wildlife or domestic animals are minimized through quarantine, inoculation, testing, and transportation requirements of Montana Department of Livestock and by fencing requirements enforced by FWP. Risk of fence problems are minimal due to flat terrain, lack of trees, and isolation from most large predators or elk populations.

NO ACTION:
There would be little threat of impact by pathogens or genetic material to wild animal or human health if this proposed action does not occur.

COMMENTS:

Some of the common diseases that humans are capable of contracting from wildlife or gam farm animals include brucellosis (undulant fever) or bovine tuberculosis. B. suis type 4 can be transmitted to humans and is considered by some to present a more serious threat to human health than B. abortus.. Human deaths attributed to B. suis type 4 infections occur most commonly among native peoples in Canada and Alaska.

If Montana wildlife populations were to be infected with tuberculosis, hunting and other wildlife related recreational activities could be adversely affected.

Game farm must comply with disease testing requirements which minimize the risk to area livestock, wildlife, and humans. Failure to comply with game farm statutes and rules is grounds for license revocation.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	POTENTIAL IMPACT				CAN IMPACT BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	UNKNOWN	NONE	MINOR	SIGNIFICANT		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		x				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		x				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		x				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		x				
e. Changes in historic or traditional recreational use of an area?			x			9e.
f. Changes in existing public benefits provided by affected wildlife populations and wildlife habitats (educational, cultural or historic)?		x				
g. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		x				
h. Other:						

PROPOSED ACTION:
9e. As a game farm, this area, which is now potentially useable for upland game bird hunting, would no longer be available to hunters. The proposed action would have no negative impacts to bicyclists or drivers who frequently recreate along Lower Valley roads. The elk farm may even attract more people to the area.

NO ACTION:
As farm land, the land may or may not be open to hunting.

COMMENTS:

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/ UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	POTENTIAL IMPACT				CAN IMPACT BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	UNKNOWN	NONE	MINOR	SIGNIFICANT		
a. A need for new or altered government services (specifically an increased regulatory role for FWP and Dept. of Livestock)?			x			10a.
b. A change in the local or state tax base and revenues?			x			10b.
c. A need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		x				
d. Other:						

PROPOSED ACTION:
10a.b. The proposed action would increase enforcement work load for FWP and Department of Livestock (DoL). As the game farm grows from the initial small stocking rates to full size (approximately 120 elk), it would probably increase the local tax base and revenues over existing agricultural operations.

NO ACTION:
If farm remained as agricultural land, no impacts to public services, utilities, and taxes would be expected.

COMMENTS:

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	POTENTIAL IMPACT				CAN IMPACT BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	UNKNOWN	NONE	MINOR	SIGNIFICANT		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			x			11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?			x			11b.
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings?		x				
d. Other:						

PROPOSED ACTION:
11a.b. Game farm fences may be viewed as obstruction in this fairly scenic, open space area. Elk may be viewed as an attraction by local recreationists.

NO ACTION:
Existing land use would maintain aesthetics and open space.

COMMENTS:

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	POTENTIAL IMPACT				CAN IMPACT BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	UNKNOWN	NONE	MINOR	SIGNIFICANT		
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		x				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		x				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		x				
d. Other:						

PROPOSED ACTION: The proposed action is not expected to have an impact on cultural or historic resources at this time.

NO ACTION:

COMMENTS:
The State Historic Preservation Office has found no known historic information for this site.
The Salish & Kootenai Cultural Committee has also been contacted and we are waiting for their reply.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	POTENTIAL IMPACT				CAN IMPACT BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	UNKNOWN	NONE	MINOR	SIGNIFICANT		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		x				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?			x		x	13b.
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements or any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		x				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		x				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		x				
e. Other:						

PROPOSED ACTION:
13b. Risks related to escape of any potentially diseased animals are reduced to minor by to Department of Livestock and FWP game farm licensing requirements. Game farm animals are not likely to become mixed in with wild elk due to distance of several miles from existing or known elk use areas.

NO ACTION:
No significant impacts associated with maintenance of existing land use.

COMMENTS:

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (Continued)

2. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

a. Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively considerable? (A project may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)

No.

b. Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?

No.

3. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

No other alternatives are necessary.

4. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

Existing standards and regulations governing game farms in 1996 are adequate to minimize risks to native wildlife or human environment. The application of best management practices for livestock operations and for weed control are expected to be incorporated into the management of this game farm. No special stipulations are proposed.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION

1. **Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? YES / NO**

No. This limited size and scope of the proposed project does not require FWP to prepare an EIS. This EA covers the entire 127 acres with a proposed maximum stocking rate of 120 elk. The lack of surface water and trees along the fenceline and the flat topography reduce the risks of fence problems and thereby the escapement of disease or animals. Existing rules and regulations governing fences, gates, disease testing, quarantine etc. will minimize these risks as well.

If an EIS is not required, explain <u>why</u> the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

There will be few impacts to environment; all risks are reduced to minor.

2. **Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances? (At a minimum, all EAs must be MADE available to the public through the State Bulletin Board System.)**

Draft EA mailing to all adjacent landowners; legal notices in appropriate newspaper(s); Draft EA copies to local libraries.

3. **Duration of comment period if any:**

26 days

4. **Name, title, address and phone number of the Person(s) Responsible for Preparing the EA:**

Wildlife Biologist Gael Bissell
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
490 N. Meridian Rd.
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406)751-4580

State Game Warden Brian Sommers
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
490 N. Meridian Rd.
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406)751-4562

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10/96

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